

DATE OF SCRIPT: 4/17/79 COPYRIGHT © 1979 BY CARL SAGAN
AP:
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SCREEN TIME:
PRODUCTION DATE:

SEQUENCE: 7/3
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SEQUENCE LABEL: BROOKLYN PARK
LOCATION:
STUDIO/SFX/ROSTRUM/STOCK

VIDEO

AUDIO

Childhood reminiscences in park across
from 8814 Bay Parkway in Brooklyn.
^R Luminative walking, park bench, pink
"Spalding" ball as prop, if available.
Gestures towards terra incognita beyond
86th Street. Additional dialogue on
tramp steamers and tug boats if any
are visible. Scene begins in broad
daylight and ends at dusk.

When I was very little I lived here
in the Bensenhurst section of Brooklyn,
New York. I knew my immediate neighborhood
intimately, but more than a few blocks away
was a strange, unknown territory -- ^{north}~~east~~
of 86th Street. It could have been Mars
for all I knew about it. Even with an early
bedtime, in winter you could occasionally
see the stars. I would look at them and
wonder what they were. I would ask older
kids and adults. They would answer, "They're
~~are~~ lights in the sky, kid." I could see
that they were lights in the sky, but what
were they? There had to be a deeper answer.

As soon as I was issued my first
library card -- I think the library was on
87th Street, an ^{alien}~~unknown~~ land -- I asked
the librarian for a book on stars. She gave
me a funny kind of picture book with ^{portraits}~~pictures~~
^{with names like}
of men and women ~~named~~ Alan Ladd and Veronica
Lake. I explained that wasn't what I wanted
at all and, for some reason then obscure to
me, she smiled and got me another book --
the right kind of book. I was so excited

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to know the answer that I opened the book,
breathlessly, right there in the library
and read until I found ^{it.} ~~the answer~~. The book
said something astonishing, a very big
thought. It said that the stars were suns,
only very far away. The sun was a star, but
close up.

Imagine ^{that} you took the sun and moved it
so far away that it was just a tiny twinkling
point of light. How far away would you have
to move it? I was ignorant of the inverse
square law for light propagation and I didn't
have a ghost of a chance of calculating the
distance to the stars. But I could tell that
if the stars were suns they had to be very
far away -- further away than 87th street,
~~further away than Manhattan,~~
~~and further away, probably, than New Jersey.~~
~~Who knows, even further away than Europe.~~
The universe was much bigger than I had
guessed.

And then I read another astonishing
fact. The Earth, which ^{includes} ~~contains~~ Brooklyn,
was a planet and it went around the sun.
There were other planets. They also went

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around the sun, some closer and some further. But the planets did not shine by their own light as the sun did. ~~Rather,~~ They just reflected light from the sun. If you were a great distance away from the sun you would not be able to see the Earth or the other planets at all. Well, then, it stood to reason, I thought, that the other stars must have planets also and some of those other planets should have life -- why not? -- and that life ^{probably} was ~~likely to~~ ~~be~~ different from life in Brooklyn. So I decided that I would be an astronomer, learn about the stars and planets and, if I could, go and visit them.

It has been my immense good fortune ~~to have~~ ~~that my~~ ^{who} parents and some ~~of my~~ teachers encouraged this strange ambition, and that I lived in this time, the first moment in human history when we are, in fact, visiting other worlds and engaging in a deep reconnaissance of the cosmos.

But if I had been born in another age, no matter how great my dedication, I would

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not have understood what the stars or the planets were. I would not have known that there were other suns and other worlds.

This is one of the great secrets, wrested from nature only ^{through} ~~because~~ of a million years of patient observation and courageous thinking by our ancestors.